

Why Cuba Is Being Punished Harshly and Israel Is Not

Some believe and others like to proclaim that international politics is based on values and good intentions. The ways Israel and Cuba are treated make that view appear ludicrous.

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Where is the logic? Cuba, a country that does no harm to anyone and sends more doctors worldwide than the World Health Organization, has been harshly sanctioned for more than 60 years.

The apartheid state of Israel, on the other hand, is carrying out a genocide before our eyes, yet no economic sanctions are imposed against the country. On the contrary, it continues to receive billions of dollars in aid and loads of heavy weapons to carry out its massacres.

What are the reasons for this double scandal?

Punish the Example

Despite its illegal nature, the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba has been the centrepiece of US policy towards the island since the victory of the revolution in 1959. This policy is described by [Chomsky](#) as "Washington's hysterical dedication to crush Cuba".

There are several reasons for this obsession. At the end of the 19th century, Cuba was incorporated as a neocolony. Since then, the United States had controlled important parts of the Cuban economy and did not want to lose that.

But above all, it was unacceptable for a country barely 180 km from the US to take a

progressive course. Moreover, that might encourage other countries to follow suit. Therefore, this revolution had to be nipped in the bud.

According to a 1960 [memo](#) from the State Department,

“every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba.” The aim was to “to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the government”.

Soon after, the Eisenhower administration imposed an embargo that would later turn into an economic blockade (also pressuring third countries to end their economic relations with Cuba). The first goal of the economic sanctions was to overthrow the revolution and, if that failed, to hurt the country as much as possible so that Cuban socialism would not be an example for other countries.

And the role model had to be destroyed not only in Latin America but also in the US itself. A quarter of US citizens say they themselves or a family member [postpone](#) treatment for a serious medical condition [because of the cost](#). Studying is reserved only for the more affluent or for students willing to get heavily into debt.



Cuba is 90 miles (145 kilometers) south of Florida. (From the Public Domain)

Such situations are unthinkable in Cuba, where being sick or studying is not a luxury. Purchasing power is much lower than in the US, but healthcare and education are free. A black resident in the US dies on average six years earlier than [a Cuban](#), and [infant mortality](#)

in Cuba is lower than it is in *the land of the free*.

Through trial and error, Cuba has succeeded in building a different society in which the social, intellectual and cultural development of the population is central. Despite severe economic sanctions, Cuba achieves scores around the average got by members of the OECD, the club of rich countries, in terms of life expectancy, infant mortality, educational level, etc.

Cuba achieves this high social score with an income per capita that is [eight times](#) lower than that of the US. If Cuba can do that with so few resources and despite the blockade, what achievements would the US not be capable of?

Currently, [30,000 Cuban health workers](#) operate in 66 countries, including [Italy](#). Over the past 60 years, Cuban doctors have treated [two billion people](#) around the world. If the US and Europe made the same effort as Cuba, together they would send more than two million doctors to the world and the shortage of health workers in the South would be solved overnight.

The Longest and Most Extensive Economic Blockade in History

Is that also why Cuba is so targeted? Anyway, the US government [itself declares](#) that the blockade against Cuba is “the most comprehensive set of U.S. economic sanctions on any country”. The aim is to isolate the island economically as much as possible from the rest of the world, thus hurting it as much as possible.

Under Trump, that isolation was increased to an unprecedented level, with 243 tough new sanctions and the inclusion of Cuba on the US list of State Sponsors of Terrorism (SSOT). The latter means that Cuba is excluded from international banking transactions and it is becoming increasingly difficult to purchase basic necessities such as fuel, food, medicine and hygiene products.

Biden has retained these tightened sanctions almost in their entirety, with disastrous consequences. This has caused a shortage of food, medicine and energy. During the pandemic, the US even prevented the delivery of ventilators to Cuba when the country was in dire need of them, a measure resulting in many deaths. According to a UN [Convention](#) (Article II, b and c), it is therefore correct to describe the blockade as a genocide.

The extraterritorial nature of the blockade makes establishing economic relations with Cuba impossible or risky for European companies or financial institutions. This is a blatant violation of international law and an assault on [European sovereignty](#). But the EU undergoes this submission, effectively making itself complicit in the US sanctions regime.

Last November, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly condemned the US blockade against Cuba for the 30th year on end. 185 countries voted in favour, the only country that refused to join the US in condemning the blockade was ... Israel.

It is therefore interesting to examine that country and its relationship with the US.

One of the Most Destructive Military Campaigns in History

While Cuba has been in the crosshairs of the US for more than sixty years and has been hit by the longest economic blockade in history, the Jewish state is allowed just about anything.



Gaza in 2023 ([Source](#))

[Experts](#) say the military campaign in Gaza is “among the deadliest and most destructive in recent history.” On an industrial scale, civilians are being killed and entire neighbourhoods flattened. This is done with the help of state-of-the-art technology, including [artificial intelligence](#).

In just over four months, [more children](#) have been [killed](#) in Gaza than in four years of war around the world. A similar record applies to the [number of journalists killed](#).

In addition to carrying out devastating ‘carpet bombings’, Israel is deliberately starving Palestinian civilians, according to [a top UN expert](#). Officially, the aim is the elimination of Hamas. But the ferocity and ruthlessness of the operation betrays that it is pretext for making the area uninhabitable and deporting the population completely.

Without [the resistance of Egypt and international pressure](#), the population of Gaza might have been [driven into the Sinai desert](#).

In January, the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague ruled that there is [sufficient evidence](#) to investigate Israel on charges of genocide. For Francesca Albanese, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied territories, the “the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide against Palestinians as a group in Gaza [has been met](#)”.

Racism and Militarism

This mass slaughter is not an excess, but the offshoot and perhaps completion of the old Zionist dream of ruling the region from “the sea to the Jordan”, as stated [in the charter](#) of Netanyahu’s party.

Making this [Zionist dream](#) come true can only be done on the basis of racism and militarism.

Israel is rightly [called](#) “the most racist state in the world”. The establishment of the Jewish state in 1948 was accompanied by the massacre and ethnic cleansing of about half of the Palestinian population. From then on, the Israeli state aimed for reducing the Palestinian

population to the smallest possible number and the annexing of the largest possible area.

The Six-Day War of 1967 saw Israel quadruple its territory and from then on it began the active colonization of the West Bank, where Palestinians are humiliated, harassed and robbed. Thousands of them, including children, have been kidnapped and held without trial for years in prisons in Israel.

What Israel is doing to the Gaza Strip however is even more horrendous. There, residents have been subjected to a complete blockade since 2007. This reduced the strip to a concentration camp.

It is not without reason that Amnesty International designated Israel as an [apartheid state](#).

Israel may also be the [most militaristic state](#) in the world. After Qatar, Israel spends the most resources per capita on [war production](#). Civil society is completely permeated by soldiers and military installations. With full military conscription for all men and women and reserve duty for all Jews until age 40, Jewish Israelis constantly alternate between the roles of citizen and soldier, blurring the lines between the two.

The military industry is among the most advanced in the world. Its success is based on two things. First, on compulsory military service, where the smartest scientific and technological minds [are selected](#) for defence research and development units.

Second, on the colonization policy and the regular military wars against Gaza. The Palestinians are an excellent [training ground](#) for the security industry. The latest security gadgets or newest attack techniques are tested on them. In other words, the weapons are *combat proven*. The wars in Gaza are perfect 'practice' for the latest weapons and drones of the Israeli military industrial complex.

Today, Israel has about [600 companies](#) exporting security technologies and services. Annually, they export more than [\\$12 billion](#) worth of weapons (that is 2.6 per cent of GDP). The record of [those arms deliveries](#) is blood-curdling.

Israel sold weapons to South Africa's apartheid government in 1975 and even agreed to supply nuclear warheads. El Salvador was supplied with napalm and other weapons during the anti-insurgency wars between 1980-1992, which killed more than 75,000 civilians (out of a population of 5 million).

During the Rwandan genocide, in which at least 800,000 people were killed, Israeli bullets, guns and grenades were used. And in September 2023, Israel supplied drones, rockets and mortars to Azerbaijan for its campaign to retake Nagorno-Karabakh, displacing 100,000 Armenians.

It is not just a matter of arms exports. From its inception, Israel has supported a range of [right-wing regimes and military dictatorships](#). The Israeli army made its experience and expertise available to what were the most brutal regimes at the time: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela.

The bloodiest involvement was in Guatemala. Behind the scenes, Israel engaged in one of the most violent counterrevolutionary campaigns the Western Hemisphere has seen since the Conquista. More than 200,000 people, mostly Indians, were killed.

During the civil war in Syria, Israel cooperated with jihadi fighters from both [al-Qaeda](#) and [IS](#). They could count on medical treatment in Israel, among other things.

Why Close Friends?

Based on all that slander, you might expect that the US and the West would treat such a country as a pariah state. The opposite is true. Since its founding, Israel has been [the largest recipient](#) of American foreign aid. It received a total of about \$300 billion in economic and military aid.

In 1989, Israel was granted '[major non-NATO ally](#)' status by the US, giving it access to extensive weapons systems. Israel was the first country to receive US-made [F-35 fighter jets](#), the most advanced in the world. The US also helped fund and produce the Iron Dome, Israel's anti-missile defence system.

In any case, Washington's extremely generous support has made Israel by far the strongest military power in the region. Even a genocide and countless war crimes do not stop the flow of money. On the contrary, in response to the war on Gaza, the White House approved a gigantic aid package worth [\\$14.5 billion](#).

If the US puts any political pressure on Israel at all, for instance to allow more humanitarian aid, it is only in the interest of Biden's re-election and to save face as much as possible vis-à-vis world public opinion.

Israel's ties with Europe are also strong. Economically, Israel has an [association agreement](#) with the European Union, which is also its largest trading partner. Scientific cooperation is intense. *Horizon Europe* is the EU's main funding program for research and innovation in Israel with a budget of [€95.5 billion](#) over seven years.

After all, Europe is also important for arms supplies to Israel. Almost a quarter of all weapons imported by the Jewish state come from Germany and Italy. After the 1956 Suez War, France provided [nuclear assistance](#) to Israel, allowing it to grow into an atomic power.

After the killing of [224](#) humanitarian workers, at least [93 journalists](#), more than [13,000](#) children and 8,400 women, and the starvation of more than two million civilians, there is still no sign of sanctions from Europe. What more horrific things need to happen before Europe takes action?

From Europe, there 'great cry and little wool'. From European ports, weapons continue to leave for Israel and the Zionist state is allowed to participate in the Euro song festival without the slightest problem.

The question then arises why do the US and the West continue to unconditionally support such a terrorist regime?

You don't have to look far for the main reason for this: the very strategic location of the Jewish state. Israel is located in the Middle East, a region where 48 percent of the [oil reserves](#) and 40 percent of the gas reserves are found.

This region also connects Europe with Asia and is crucial for international trade. About [30 per cent](#) of the world's sea containers pass through the nearby Suez Canal. The region is also crucial for the [New Silk Road](#) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) a global

infrastructure project through which China is moving the centre of world trade back to Asia. The same counts for its counterpart, the so-called India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor ([IMEC](#)).

Israel can be regarded as a forward US military base manned by a very reliable partner, who helps control this very strategic region. This was recently put sharply by [Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](#), the nephew of President John F. Kennedy:

“Israel... is almost like having an aircraft carrier in the Middle East.”

Israel plays the gendarme of the region. Since its inception, Israel has successfully fought several wars against its Arab neighbours. The Israeli army regularly carries out raids or attacks against countries or groups that do not follow the West’s lead: Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Iran.

In the past, Washington could rely on three other allies for its geopolitical agenda in this region: Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Since 1979 it has lost support from Iran and in recent years Saudi Arabia and Turkey have decided on an increasingly independent course.

This leaves Israel as the sole and irreplaceable ally in this crucial region. Remember that Israel is also the only country with nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

That explains why the Jewish state can afford just about anything and that it can act with almost total impunity.

Farce

If Western leaders are to be believed, their policies are based on values and good intentions. In his own words, [Biden](#) bases his foreign relations on “upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law, and treating every person with dignity”. The EU Treaty [states](#) that the Union is founded on values such as “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights”.

In the light of how the US and Europe treat Israel and Cuba, that is a farce. The so-called ‘rules-based international order’ is a smokescreen to obscure what it is actually about: vulgar economic and geostrategic interests.

Malaysian Prime Minister [Anwar Ibrahim](#) makes no bones about it:

“The gut-wrenching tragedy that continues to unfold in the Gaza Strip has laid bare the self-serving nature of the much valued, and vaunted rules-based order”.

The very contrasting treatment of Cuba and Israel illustrates the moral bankruptcy of the Western order, an order that is increasingly being taken less seriously in the global South. North-South relations are shifting, not only economically but also ideologically. A new era is dawning.

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Sources

[Why does the US support Israel?](#)

[US sends Israel 100+ weapons shipments. Most Americans oppose it – but Biden ignores them](#)

Note

[1] Financial Times, February 25, 2021, p. 1.

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